



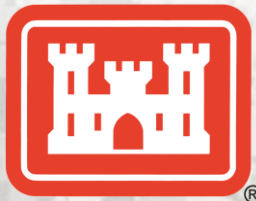
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# Effective Media Engagements

Chief, Public Affairs Office

Vicksburg, Miss.

June 17, 2015



US Army Corps of Engineers  
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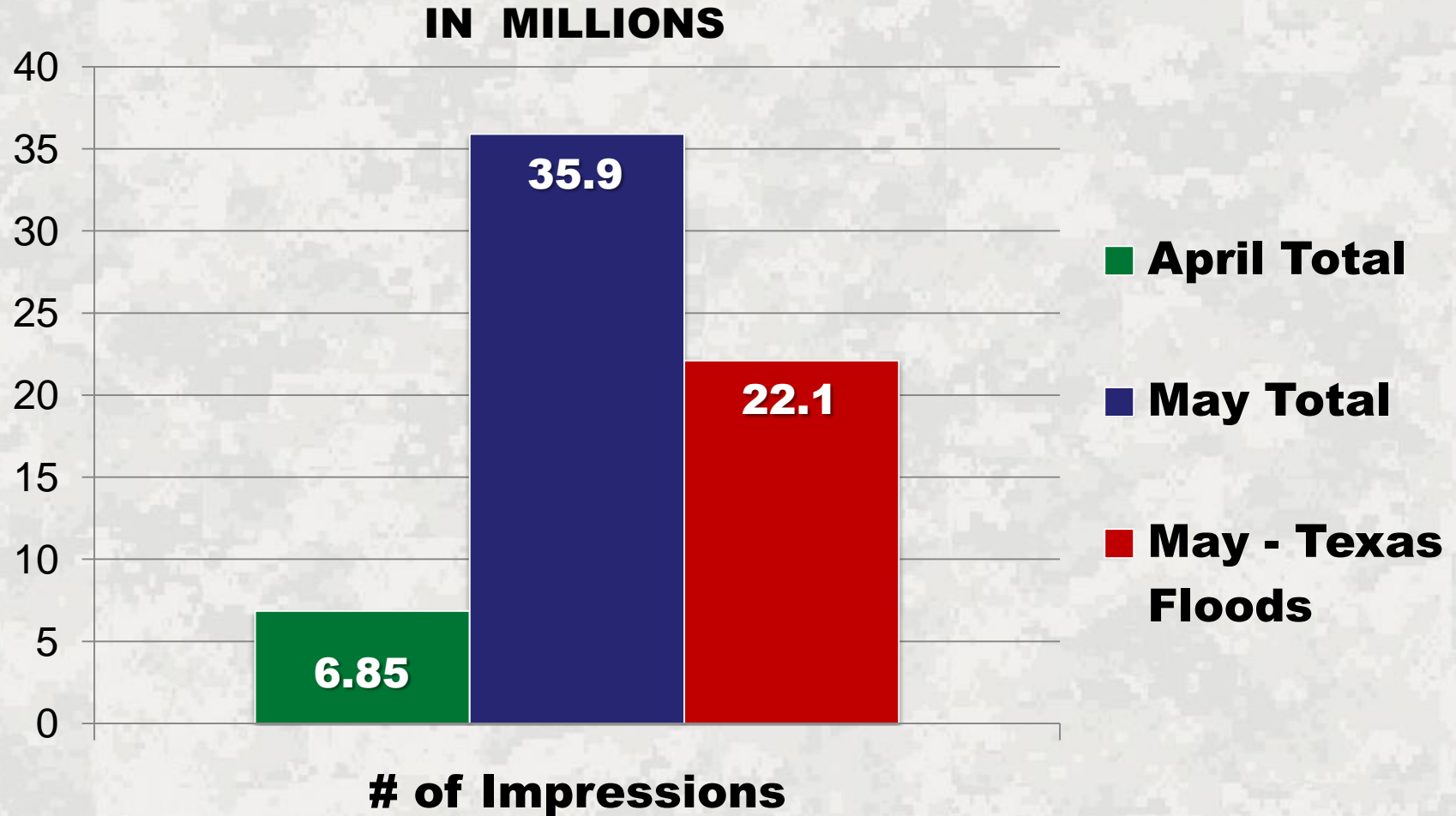




# Public Affairs in Action



# Social media is exploding



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# Prepare key messages

***“Who has  
questions  
for my  
answers?”***

**Henry Kissinger**



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# Preparation is the key to success

***Everything* you bring to the interview will be better than *anything* you make up after you hear the questions.**



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# Before the interview, consider:

## Points you want to make:

- **Topics you want to cover.**
- **Information for the record.**
- **Anecdotes and/or illustrations.**
- **The rule of three.**



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# Public safety is our # 1 priority



## What is your key message?



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# **You're in control!**



***“The questions don’t do the damage.  
Only the answers do.”***



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# And don't do this . . .



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# THE DISTRICT ENGINEER'S ROLE IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

**Situation:** In May 2015, the State of Louisiana started to experience high water conditions along the Red River resulting in lock closures and minor backwater flooding. By the first week of June, the river had reached records highs impacting residential areas and key infrastructure. The State of Louisiana, the Red River levee boards, and local emergency managers responded to the event with the support of the Vicksburg District (MVK).

**Engagements:** 8-9 June, COL Cross the MVK District Engineer (DE) and Pat Hemphill, the DPM, traveled to Shreveport to conduct a series of strategic engagements.

- The DE met with SEN Vitter one hour prior to his press conference and discussed the Congressman's concerns.
- The MVK Team met with the levee board representatives, local mayors, and emergency management personnel to answer their questions and share information.
- The MVK Staff contacted REP Abraham and the staff of SEN Cassidy to answer their questions and concerns.
- The MVK Team went to local TV stations and met with meteorologists. The DE explained that a "lock closure" was a navigation term and does not mean the water control gates were closed on the structures. There was a general misconception that lock closures were holding back water.

**Effects:** The DE and his staff were able to support the operations of state and local authorities and levee boards.

- The team provided an updated status on USACE support, critical facilities, technical data, and future plans.
- The team was able to address several issues and concerns of the local, state and federal leaders.
- The team was able to dispel two notable myths:
  - 1) Gates were closed on the locks and holding back water.
  - 2) The SWD was adding to the flood by releasing water from their upstream flood control lakes.
- The team strengthened pre-existing relationships and built new ones throughout the region.

**Preparation:** Prior to the flood event, MVK's solid relationships with the local, state, and federal leaders enhanced our ability to anticipate their needs

- The DE conducted Congressional visits twice a year and the District maintained constant contact with their staffs.
- The District Staff leadership routinely met with levee boards and community leaders along the river.
- At the start of the flood fight, MVK sent an LNO to AR's and LA's state level emergency operations center (EOC).



**Cross speaks at a local press conference with Senator Vitter and several state leaders.**



**COL Cross and Richard Jones (MVK Area Manager) meet with Lo Walker, Bossier City mayor**



**Meeting with the Caddo Parish Emergency Ops Team and Levee Board Representatives.**



**Engaging Ollie Tyler, the Shreveport Mayor, and her emergency management team.**



**MVK LNO Charles Stokes with State Rep. Peacock at the LA EOC**



**Flooded residential area near Shreveport, LA**



**Flooding at Lock and Dam #4 on the Red River**





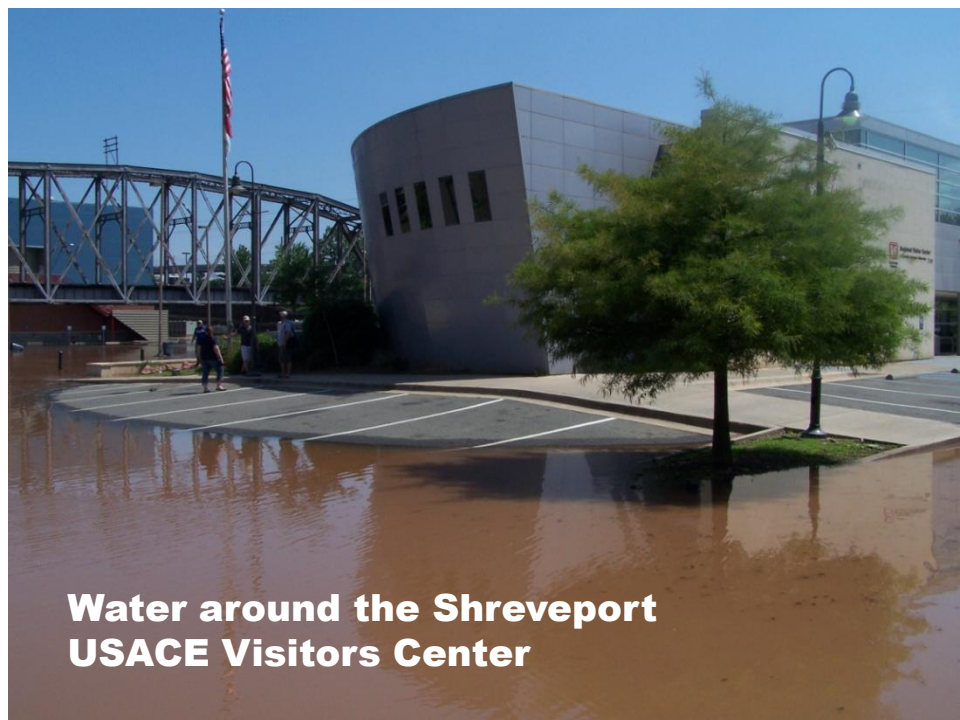
**Sandbags  
placed at  
boardwalk in  
Bossier City, La.**



**Inspecting seepage  
area on Miller County  
#2 levee**



**Divers attempting to place inflatable  
bladder in 60-inch structure on Bayou  
Nicholas levee in Red River Parish**



**Water around the Shreveport  
USACE Visitors Center**